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FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8389

INFO RUEHXL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 000574

SIPDIS

EUR/CE, EUR/ERA, INR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/05/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL EUN PL

SUBJECT: EURO ELECTIONS: CIVIC PLATFORM HEADED FOR BIG VICTORY

REF: A. WARSAW 552

1B. WARSAW 522

Classified By: Political Counselor Dan Sainz for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. As expected when the campaign began, the ruling Civic Platform (PO) should win around half the votes in June 7 elections for European Parliament, according to opinion polls issued in the campaign's final days. The opposition Law and Justice (PiS) will finish a distant second, with around 25 percent. The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and Polish People's Party (PSL) will easily surpass the electoral threshold, unlike Libertas and other extremist parties that would normally benefit from low voter turnout. The PO's decision to run 'political celebrities' means the party will have to fill prominent positions in parliament with MPs from outside of PM Tusk's inner circle, a development that could feed factionalism within the party. Even after the July 7 vote, parties will remain in campaign mode, as the PO and PiS shift their attention to the 2010 race for president. END SUMMARY.

POLITICS AS USUAL

12. (SBU) With two days to go until European Parliament (EP) elections, Polish opinion polls largely reflect predictions made at the campaign's outset. The ruling Civic Platform (PO) is expected to win around 50 percent of the vote, which should translate into 25-28 seats. The opposition Law and Justice (PiS) will place second, with approximately 25 percent (around 15 seats), and the remaining seats will be split among the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), polling around 15 percent, and the junior coalition partner Polish People's Party (PSL), with approximately 10 percent support. Concern that low voter turnout -- which could be as low as 20 percent -- will benefit small extremist parties seems largely unfounded. Even Libertas Polska -- the ad hoc coalition of right-wing nationalist parties -- is polling well below the five percent threshold for parliamentary representation.

13. (SBU) In an effort to reduce advertising costs and raise voter turnout, mainstream parties placed big-name political 'celebrities' at the top of their electoral lists. Prominent PO politicians expected to win easily include: former PM Jerzy Buzek, a leading candidate for EP president (ref A); Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, current chair of the EP foreign relations committee; Danuta Hubner, currently Poland's EU commissioner; Janusz Lewandowski, a potential candidate to be Poland's next EU commissioner; Sejm Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) chair Krzysztof Lisek; Jaroslaw Walesa; Slawomir Nitras; Jacek Protasiewicz; Roza Thun; and former Sejm FAC chair Pawel Zalewski. PiS spin-meisters Adam Bielan and Michal Kaminski should easily make the cut, as should former Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro; Sejm FAC deputy chair Pawel Kowal; and Lisek's controversial rival, PiS "hatchet-man" Jacek Kurski. Leading SLD candidates are current MEPs Marek Siwiec and Lidia Geringer de Oedenberg; parliamentary caucus

chair Wojciech Olejniczak is fighting for election in a tough Warsaw race. Deputy speaker of the Sejm Jaroslaw Kalinowski and Sejm EU Affairs Committee chair Andrzej Grzyb are among PSL's top candidates.

BACK-BENCHERS ASCENDANT

14. (C) Under Polish law, MPs elected to European Parliament automatically forfeit their seats in the Sejm when election results are certified. Seats vacated by MPs are filled from a list of alternates identified in the 2007 parliamentary elections. As a result, the ruling PO will be required, on short notice, to replace prominent committee chairs and deputy chairs with back-benchers, including a number of MPs outside -- or on the extremities of -- PM Tusk's inner circle. While Tusk's ability to enforce party discipline will not be jeopardized in the short term, small shifts within the parliamentary caucus could increase the risk of factionalism, especially as competing PO leaders try to position themselves as Tusk's successor. (NB: If, as expected, Tusk decides to run for president in 2010, he at some point will be required to step down, at least temporarily, as prime minister.)

PiS: KACZYNSKI BROTHERS THREATENED?

15. (C) A last minute spate of anti-German rhetoric, spurred by a mid-May CDU/CSU resolution condemning post-WWII mass expulsions, has given PiS a much-needed bounce in the polls. If PiS performs as predicted, party chair Jaroslaw Kaczynski should be able to keep the party united, at least through 2010 presidential elections. According to MP Pawel

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Poncyjlusz, fourth on PiS's Warsaw list, even President Lech Kaczynski's closest advisors do not expect him to win re-election in 2010. Despite his slim odds, no one in the party expects Kaczynski to step down in favor of another PiS candidate. The only two viable alternatives are his twin brother, Jaroslaw, and former Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro, who has far outpaced the competition as PiS's "number one" MEP candidate in Krakow. President Kaczynski is no fan of Ziobro, who enjoys strong backing from Radio Maryja's Father Rydzik. According to Poncyjlusz, who was almost expelled from the party after he blamed Jaroslaw Kaczynski for PiS's poor campaign performance in an April media interview, PiS is increasingly divided between "big city" members who want to attract urban voters, and those who believe PiS should stick to the traditional values message that resonates in small towns and rural areas.

PSL EXCEEDING (LOW) EXPECTATIONS

16. (C) Although initially expected to barely cross the threshold for parliamentary representation, PSL has exceeded expectations. PSL candidates have largely kept silent as tensions between PO and PiS have flared, making PSL an attractive alternative to some voters frustrated with "politics as usual." If, as expected, deputy speaker Kalinowski wins an MEP seat, his departure for Brussels will leave Deputy PM/Economy Minister Waldemar Pawlak in sole control of the party. In the short-term, Kalinowski's absence could increase the number of public "misunderstandings" between PSL and PO, since Pawlak has a reputation for taking action without coordinating within the Government or his own party.

LEFT STILL DIVIDED

17. (SBU) Despite initial plans to have big-name candidates drive campaigns, President Kaczynski (PiS) and PM Tusk (PO) have become the "locomotives" of their respective parties, leaving SLD scrambling to find a personality of suitable gravitas to carry the party's banner. When former PM Wladzimierz Cimoszewicz -- PM Tusk's candidate for Council of Europe Secretary General -- declined, SLD turned to former

President Aleksander Kwasniewski. Wojciech Olejniczak, SLD's parliamentary caucus chair and SLD's "number one" in Warsaw, currently polling at around 11 percent in his district, expressed disappointment with SLD's low public support. "We failed to present ourselves as an alternative" to PO and PiS, he told the press.

LIBERTAS' DAYS ARE NUMBERED

¶8. (C) Throughout the campaign, there has been concern that low voter turnout and Polish Public Television's (TVP) more-than-tacit support would benefit extremist, right-wing parties. Despite these potential electoral advantages, the Libertas-led electoral coalition of right-ring parties -- League of Polish Families, Forward Poland, and other smaller factions formerly aligned with LPR -- continues to poll far below the threshold for parliamentary representation.

Acknowledging the new grouping's failure, Libertas head Artur Zawisza has indicated that the coalition will dissolve itself after European elections. Given lingering tensions between the various right-wing parties, there is little chance the parties will decide to cooperate anytime soon.

COMMENT: THE RACE FOR PRESIDENT IS ON

¶9. (C) The outcome of the vote will likely do little to affect the existing correlation of political forces in Poland, and it is unlikely that either PiS or PO will set aside their campaign tactics. Although neither Kaczynski nor Tusk have formally declared their intention to run for president in 2010, both parties have their eyes on the prize.

We expect partisan rivalries to continue at a slow boil.

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